



# Accessibility Plan Progress Report—2024

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ATSSC·SCDATA

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## About this progress report

In 2022, the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada (ATSSC) published its first [accessibility plan](#). This plan responds to the requirements of the [Accessible Canada Act](#) (ACA), which aims to make Canada barrier-free by 2040. The ACA requires regulated organizations to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas:

- employment
- built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than ICT
- procurement of goods, services and facilities
- design and delivery of programs and services
- transportation

The ACA also requires organizations to publish an accessibility plan every 3 years and to prepare annual progress reports. The ATSSC's [2023 Accessibility Plan Progress Report](#) outlined the steps we took in the first year after we published our 2022 accessibility plan. This report details our progress during 2024.

## General

### Progress report at a glance

The ATSSC is committed to offering accessible services, programs, and environments for all those who interact with our organization and the administrative tribunals we support. Our 2022 [accessibility plan](#) set out key actions to improve accessibility over several years. Our goals include actively championing accessibility, raising awareness of accessibility requirements, promoting inclusion, and providing accessible physical and virtual environments.

In 2024, we continued to use the tools and processes in our accessibility plan and added several improvements. We launched a new intranet for staff and tribunal members, which involved reviewing hundreds of pages of text for plain and inclusive language, reorganizing content, and striving to meet all Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA criteria. We made it easier for staff and managers to learn about requesting accommodation measures by adding clear instructions to the intranet and holding information sessions. We also upgraded the technology in our hearing rooms and prepared a guide on best practices for ensuring accessible hearings. These are just some examples of our ongoing efforts to make a difference for all our employees and clients, including those with disabilities.

We made significant progress in 2024, but we're determined to continue identifying, removing, and preventing barriers. Through consultations, we have found several areas on which we can improve as we move forward. This work will continue to be a priority for our organization, as we share a goal with the independent tribunals we support of making justice fully accessible to all Canadians.

## **Providing feedback**

We invite you to comment on this Accessibility Plan Progress Report. To provide feedback, you can use our [accessibility feedback form](#) or contact us by email, telephone or mail.

### **Email**

[communications@tribunal.gc.ca](mailto:communications@tribunal.gc.ca)

### **Telephone**

613-954-6350

### **Mail**

Director General Corporate Services  
Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada  
4 West-240 Sparks St  
Ottawa ON K1A 0E1

## **Designated person to receive feedback**

The Director General, Corporate Services is responsible for receiving feedback.

## **Alternate formats**

You can ask to receive the ATSSC Accessibility Plan Progress Report in the following formats:

- print
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic format compatible with adaptive technologies for people with disabilities

The ATSSC must provide its Accessibility Plan Progress Report in alternate formats, upon request.

- Requests for documents in braille or audio format are processed within 45 days.
- The response time for all other requests is 15 days.

**To request an alternate format, contact us by email, telephone or mail.**

### **Email**

[communications@tribunal.gc.ca](mailto:communications@tribunal.gc.ca)

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# Progress by areas in section 5 of the *Accessible Canada Act*

## Employment

**Employment** refers to all processes, practices and services that we use to support employees in their professional journey at the ATSSC. This support begins with recruitment and continues with hiring, onboarding, providing accommodations, career and talent development, performance management and departure.

### **Action 1: Contribute to meeting the Government of Canada's commitment to hiring at least 5,000 people with disabilities by 2025**

In 2023, we created inclusive hiring strategies to increase the representation of employees with disabilities at the ATSSC. These strategies included restricting the area of selection, using blind recruiting, and promoting diverse pools, among other practices. Throughout 2024, we continued to use and improve these strategies. We train hiring managers on inclusive hiring every 6 months. Each time we staff positions, we use a checklist developed in 2023 to identify systemic barriers.

We're finalizing an Employment Systems Review (ESR). The objective of an ESR is to find barriers or biases in our people management policies and procedures that may prevent employees from fully participating in our workforce and advancing their careers. So far, we have held several consultations, gathered data, and analyzed our findings. We'll finish the review in 2025 and recommend ways to reduce or eliminate any issues we find.

We continue to encourage staff to use the [Government of Canada Accessibility Passport](#) to discuss accommodations with their managers. We have brought visibility to this tool on our intranet and in messages to staff. We include the Accessibility Passport in our letters of offer and onboarding process and encourage new staff to use it as early as possible.

### **Action 2: Raise awareness of the reality of equity-seeking groups**

The ATSSC's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee continued to provide a safe space for employees to share their experiences throughout 2024. It also helped to increase awareness of EDI issues across the organization through training, special events and regular messaging to staff. In February 2024, we held a special event for all staff with guest speaker Anthony McLean on mental health, EDI in the workplace, and micro-aggressions. Individual secretariats also organized internal activities and conferences, such as the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board's conference with Lorin McDonald, a respected champion in building awareness of accessibility and disability issues.

All ATSSC staff and managers continued to follow a minimum number of training hours on EDI topics in 2024. They selected resources from the EDI learning path published on our intranet, which includes accessibility topics. In 2025, we plan to share a toolkit for managers that will deepen their understanding of EDI issues. It will also help them to create a safe space for discussion within their teams and to foster an inclusive, respectful, and accessible work environment.

We also promoted training, resources, and events hosted by the Canadian School of Public Service, the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion—and other organizations that raise awareness about accessibility needs—in our weekly staff newsletter.

In 2024, the ATSSC's Accessibility Working Group set an objective to build accessibility expertise through additional training. They made an inventory including:

- Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) training
- training that has been provided at the ATSSC
- external training
- training to be developed

With this information, the working group created a reference tool with training recommendations for different audiences that can be promoted within our organization.

### **Action 3: Ensure that all ATSSC staff and tribunal members have access to the tools, devices, and support measures required to succeed**

We proactively support staff by providing ergonomic coaching and assessments without requiring a doctor's note. Following assessment, we offer ergonomic equipment to existing and newly hired staff. We handle requests for accommodation on an individual basis and seek support as needed from external partners.

To ensure that we offer staff and tribunal members tools and devices that meet their needs, the ATSSC's Information Services and Solutions team and Human Resources met with Shared Services Canada's [Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology](#) (AAACT) in 2023. AAAC shared best practices and outlined the accessibility requirements and evaluation criteria we should apply to IT-related accommodation requests. We have used these guidelines throughout 2024.

### **Action 4: Collaborate with equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) committees, employees and their managers, and other stakeholders to complete a gap analysis of current accommodations process for new and existing employees**

Our goal is to make accommodation procedures comprehensive, effective and tailored to the needs of individuals. We recognize that having sound accommodation processes helps every member of our workforce reach their full potential at work.

We continue to review accommodation requests on a case-by-case basis to ensure we consider the unique needs of each person. Managers work with the ATSSC Labour Relations team to ensure they respect the duty to accommodate when responding to requests for accommodation. We ask managers to:

- foster healthy, respectful and safe dialogue with employees to fully understand their needs and provide appropriate support



- promote the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport as a tool to support conversations about optimal workplace conditions and to identify necessary adjustments, such as adaptive equipment or other measures
- understand employees' limitations and the barriers they face
- make reasonable efforts to explore options to accommodate employees in the workplace, when it makes sense to do so

We encourage staff to give us feedback on their accommodation requests so that we can make the process as effective and efficient as possible.

### **Action 5: Ensure all existing employees can get information about workplace accommodations**

Staff can easily find out how to get the tools, devices, and support measures they need to succeed on our newly redesigned intranet. We have included information about the ATSSC's duty to accommodate, how to request an accommodation and how requests are administered. We have also outlined how to request an ergonomic assessment and how to obtain ergonomic equipment.

We promote the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport as a tool that helps employees receive the support they need to succeed in their roles. We inform new hires about the Accessibility Passport during onboarding so that we can offer solutions as early as possible.

We offered information about requesting accommodations and ergonomic equipment during an all-staff event in May 2024. Members of our Occupational Health and Safety team were present to answer all questions. We also held an information session on the Duty to Accommodate for managers across the ATSSC. In this session, we emphasized legal obligations and procedures, gave information about ergonomics and accommodation options, and asked managers to encourage their employees to use the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport to discuss their needs.

## **Built environment**

**Built environment** refers to all structures and objects that make up the ATSSC's workspaces. This includes entrances, elevators, meeting rooms, hearing and mediation rooms, offices, and lighting.

### **Action 1: Ensure that all refit and modernization projects under the control of the ATSSC respect Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) built-environment accessibility standards**

We're committed to ensuring that all refit and modernization projects under our responsibility meet Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) built environment accessibility standards.

In 2023, we began altering ATSSC workspaces to accommodate the new common hybrid work model for the public service. All alterations meet accessibility standards, and we will ensure that any new projects meet them as well. Though the duty to accommodate process, we reduced the lighting in some work areas to support employees with light sensitivities.

To ensure that accessibility remains top of mind as we manage our built environment, all Accommodations, Facilities and Workplace Management staff have completed accessibility awareness training. The ATSSC is committed to ensuring that any new staff joining these teams will take the training within 6 months of their start date.

The space reservation system introduced in 2023 allows staff to select accessible workstations and workspaces, including areas that have reduced lighting or prohibit food—an important measure for individuals with light sensitivity or food allergies.

## **Information and communication technologies (ICT)**

**Information and communications technologies (ICT)** refers to the ways people share and access information. It can include emails, meetings, visual communications, and documents. It also refers to how content is written and presented on websites like Canada.ca or on tribunal websites. The ATSSC has a website on Canada.ca and an intranet site, and we also help the 12 tribunals we support to develop and maintain their websites.

### **Action 1: All ATSSC internal and external webpages (including those of the administrative tribunals we support) are compliant with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) Guidelines on Making Communication Products and Activities Accessible (WCAG 2.1 AA Standards)**

In 2024, we launched a new intranet for ATSSC staff and members of the tribunals we serve. We invested significant effort in this project, reviewing hundreds of pages for plain and inclusive language, improving navigation, and making the site user-friendly. The new ATSSC intranet complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards except for some content that is still only available in PDF format. We have been working throughout 2024 on converting remaining PDF content into more accessible html versions and will continue into 2025.

We formed a working group in September 2023 to collaborate with the tribunals we support on a project to improve the accessibility of their websites. In 2024, the working group took an inventory of the accessibility information available on the tribunals' websites and began preparing examples of best practices to share with tribunal chairpersons. Some tribunals improved accessibility features on their websites in the past year. For example, the Canada Industrial Relations Board website now has an accessibility menu and has added closed captioning to video content. We expect to continue working on this complex and large-scale project over several years.

### **Action 2: All newly procured hardware and software will be accessible and meet European Norm (EN) 301 549 standards**

Our Information Services and Solutions team works closely with our Procurement team to integrate Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat accessibility criteria and information technology (IT) procurement standards. We use the Accessibility Consideration Certification form for all procurement requests to ensure that newly acquired hardware and software meet established standards.

### **Action 3: Review requirements regarding the prevention and blocking of assistive or adaptive technologies, software or equipment**

In 2024, we finished implementing our audio-visual strategy to equip hearing rooms with tools and software that are accessible to all tribunal members, employees, interpreters, stenographers, parties, witnesses, counsel, and members of the public. We also developed a best practices guide to ensure hearing rooms are accessible.

While the technology is accessible, some users may need additional assistive or adaptive tools to use it. For example, a blind registry officer in charge of a hearing would need to have appropriate equipment set up to perform their duties effectively. For this reason, we continue to review and enhance our electronic security environment to support a wider range of assistive and adaptive tools.

### **Communication, other than Information and communication technologies**

**Communications other than information and communications technology (ICT)** includes all the ways in which the ATSSC communicates including letters, emails, forms, templates, procedures, instructions, verbal communications, and images, among other methods.

#### **Action 1: Ensure that the content of all documents, forms, templates, messages (internal and external), hyperlinks, images and websites is accessible and complies with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) Guidelines on Making Communication Products and Activities Accessible.**

The ATSSC has set plain language usage as a priority for 2024 and 2025. We're developing training and resources for staff and tribunal members in collaboration with the tribunals we support to strengthen the use of plain language in all communications. In 2024, we prepared a list of plain language tools and training to be shared with all staff, and we have published an ATSSC Style Guide outlining plain language principles on our intranet.

All members of the Corporate Communications team have taken plain language training within 6 months of beginning to work at the ATSSC, and they ensure that all-staff messages and new intranet content use plain and inclusive language.

Individual secretariats have also strengthened the use of plain language in their areas. The Secretariat to the Social Security Tribunal of Canada developed a [style guide](#) that explains plain language and inclusive writing to their staff and the tribunal members they support. The Secretariat to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board is reviewing its website content to ensure it's written in plain language, and the Secretariat to the Canada Industrial Relations Board will offer inclusive language training to tribunal members in December 2024.

#### **Action 2: Explore alternative ways of communicating information**

Because no single way of communicating information meets all accessibility needs, we use a variety of formats. In 2024, we used infographics and graphics in addition to written text. We're also exploring the possibility of sharing information through fully accessible videos.

## Procurement of goods, services and facilities

Accessible **procurement** aims to meet as wide a range of user needs as possible from the start of a procurement process. ATSSC procurement staff are responsible for ensuring that they include accessibility requirements and considerations in the procurement and decision-making processes.

**Action: Ensure that all procurement decisions are made with accessibility considerations in mind**

We plan to complete a checklist of accessibility considerations related to procurement by the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year. We will draw on the expertise of other federal government organizations to create a checklist that is tailored to our organizational needs.

Throughout 2024, the ATSSC procurement team has been preparing resources to educate clients about accessible procurement. We have already added some resources to our intranet, including a guide that reminds clients to complete an accessibility considerations attestation form, and instructions for procuring ergonomic equipment. We plan to add additional information by the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year.

## Design and delivery of programs and services

We **design and deliver programs and services** to meet our operational mandate of providing essential support services to federal administrative tribunals.

**Action 1: Ensure changes to programs and services, including design and delivery elements, include broader accessibility considerations**

In 2024, we continued to evaluate the accessibility of our programs and services. The accessibility working group, formed in September 2023, began to identify common challenges and accessibility gaps in the tribunal secretariats, and to find areas where we could apply common solutions.

To improve the accessibility of services offered to members of the public when they interact with the tribunals we support, we focused on:

- offering accessibility training to staff and tribunal members
- rewriting tribunal website content in plain language
- adding accessibility-related information to tribunal websites

Staff in several secretariats completed accessibility training in 2024. The Secretariat to the Social Security Tribunal of Canada trained employees who develop forms and letters sent to the public on how to use plain language. The Secretariat to the Canada Industrial Relations Board and Integrated Secretariat 2 required staff to follow training on accessibility and inclusivity. All ATSSC employees were expected to follow our EDI learning path, which includes accessibility topics.

In 2023, several tribunals served by the ATSSC took the [Access to Justice Index](#) challenge and received reports recommending improvements. In 2024, we asked the tribunals to use these reports to identify areas where they could increase accessibility, such as training staff and members on the

duty to accommodate, setting a general policy on accommodating special needs, communicating decisions in plain and accessible language, and using plain language and including a page about accessibility on their websites.

## **Action 2: Ensure all parties are aware that accommodations are available to them**

As outlined in [Action 5 of the Employment section](#), we took several steps to ensure staff and managers are aware of available accommodations. We launched a new intranet including clear information about accommodations, and we have promoted the Government of Canada Accessibility Passport in letters of offer, messages to staff, and information sessions for staff.

We're continuing to revise forms and instructions prepared for the public to make it easy for them to request accommodations. The Social Security Tribunal of Canada (SST) developed an accessibility policy to explain to appellants their right to accommodation and how to request an accommodation. Several other tribunals have already added instructions to their websites outlining how parties can request accommodations, and we will continue revising forms and instructions on tribunal websites in 2025.

## **Transportation**

We manage **transportation** for staff and tribunal members who need to travel for work, whether by air, rail, bus, ferry, or any other appropriate transportation mode.

### **Action 1: Raise awareness among members and staff**

In 2024, we continued raising awareness of accessibility issues among tribunal members and staff. Specifically, the Travel Centre of Expertise was briefed on the importance of being proactive when asking tribunal members and staff for their accessibility requirements when travelling.

### **Action 2: Share information with tribunal members and staff**

Work is under way to update communications on how to request travel-related accommodations and information about the Accessibility Passport was shared with Travel Centre of Expertise team.

### **Action 3: Seek continuous feedback**

Our travel request form provides a space to indicate the preferred type of transportation and to make specific accommodation requests.

In 2024, we sought feedback from tribunal members on the travel services we provide to them through an annual satisfaction survey. Tribunal members identified some areas for improvement, and our travel services team is reviewing their processes to ensure all needs are met. We expect to complete the review and update processes in 2025.

## **Consultations**

### **Accessibility working group**

The ATSSC's accessibility working group—which discusses challenges the various areas of our organization face to find common solutions—continued to meet regularly in 2024.

The working group consulted with the tribunals we support to identify key priorities that could be applied across the organization. We used the results of the Access to Justice Index reports to identify 3 priorities:

- building accessibility expertise through training
- using plain language
- adding information about accessibility and accommodation requests to the ATSSC website and intranet, and to the websites of the tribunals served by the ATSSC

As detailed in the previous sections, we made progress on these priorities throughout 2024 and will continue to work on them in 2025.

We held these consultations through virtual meetings and group discussions to maximize participation, as some ATSSC employees work in different locations across Canada. We ensured the consultations were accessible to all participants.

### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**

The ATSSC's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee brought a diverse and inclusive perspective to our accessibility consultations. The EDI committee held monthly discussions throughout 2024.

The committee discussed accessibility issues and the progress of activities included in the plan. The committee met virtually, which allowed members working in different cities to participate.

### **Discussions with senior management**

The Accessibility Working Group, with the support of the Human Resources team, continued to consult with ATSSC senior management throughout 2024. They followed up on senior management's request to create a detailed action plan for 2024-25 and reported on progress made so far.

### **Progress report**

In October 2024, we began drafting this progress report, which has helped us to evaluate and communicate our Accessibility Plan progress. We asked all subject matter experts, members representing the secretariats within the ATSSC, and the Accessibility Working Group to share their comments and report their progress.

Completing this progress report has helped us to document the actions we took during the past year. It has also helped us to identify where we have succeeded, what work needs to continue, and what we have learned. This report will guide our continued efforts to improve accessibility at the ATSSC.

## Feedback

We have added an [accessibility feedback form](#) to our website and encourage the public, staff, tribunal members, and anyone who interacts with us to comment on their experiences.

In 2024, we received feedback on our progress in implementing our accessibility plan from members of the EDI Committee and the Accessibility Working Group.

Members of the EDI Committee shared their personal experiences and accessibility challenges, which have been essential to forming our accessibility plan. We will continue to seek their feedback as we develop our second accessibility plan in 2025.

We received feedback that while increasing accessibility is very important to our organization, limited resources make it difficult for us to move forward as quickly as we would like. The Accessibility Working Group reacted to this feedback by looking for ways to maximize the resources already available to us and ensuring they're shared consistently across all the secretariats and business units of our organization.

## Conclusion

We're committed to increasing accessibility for everyone who interacts with our organization. Inclusivity, equity, and respect are at the heart of our values, and we strive to offer excellent support to Canadians seeking access to justice, the tribunal members we support, and our employees.

Since we published our first accessibility plan in 2022, we have made significant progress in identifying barriers and planning measures to address them and have taken concrete action to improve the services and supports that we offer and the way that we communicate. However, we know that we can advance further. To do so, we will continue seeking feedback, listening, and acting on what we learn.

There are a wide range of barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in the workforce or gaining equal access to justice. We'll need to continually assess and address accessibility needs. That's why we approach improving accessibility as an integral part of our ongoing operations rather than a discrete project that we can complete and put aside. At the ATSSC, we're dedicated to building an organization that serves and supports everyone.